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Kents Corner Historic District
Calais, Washington County, Vermont

Summary

The land surrounding Kents Corner is a quintessential rural Vermont crossroads neighborhood. Kents Corner is named for the pioneer homesteader Remember Kent and his descendants who settled on the high ground along Curtis Brook in the western part of the Town of Calais. Located less than ten miles from Montpelier, Calais always has been a hill town without a geographic center. The neighborhood around Kents Corner is more than a cluster of dwellings; it is a network of cultural, economic and social linkages.

The Kents Corner Historic District meets the National Register Criteria C for the design value of the neighborhood's predominant historic architectural style, Greek Revival as interpreted in rural north-central Vermont in the mid 19th century. This style of architecture was the most popular 19th century style in Vermont and is well represented in the Kents Corner Historic District. The period of significance for the district is 1800-1955 and there are 42 properties, with 53 contributing and 50 non-contributing structures. Building stock in the neighborhood grew slowly after 1955 when 15 non-contributing houses were added in the district. There are several historic archeological sites in the district: (Wheelock Monument (#2E), Goodenough-Wheeler Farm site (#42B), Joshua Bliss Sawmill and Woodworking Shop site (#34A), and the Kent Brick Kiln site (#6).

Kents Corner neighborhood is a product of traditional Vermont agriculture interrupted here and there by small industry and religious expression and is also eligible under National Register Criteria A. Shaped by local tradition, this mixture of natural and cultural forms is the remarkable landscape that surrounds Kents Corner today. Kents Corner Historic District is significant in the following areas: Architecture, Agriculture, Industry, Commerce, Religion, Government, Landscape, and Conservation/Preservation.

The Kents Corner Historic District meets the National Register Criteria C for the design value of the community's

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predominant historic architectural style, Greek Revival as interpreted in the 1840s and 1850s in rural north-central Vermont. This style of architecture was the most popular 19th century style in Vermont and is well represented in the Kents Corner Historic District. Kents Corner neighborhood is a product of traditional Vermont agriculture interrupted here and there by small industry and religious expression and is also eligible under National Register Criteria A. Shaped by local tradition, this mixture of natural and cultural forms is the remarkable landscape that surrounds Kents Corner today. The district is located in the western part of the Town of Calais in Washington County, Vermont.

Early Settlement at Kents Corner

The earliest published account of Kents Corner appeared in a letter written by Shubael Wheeler (1827-1856), Calais's first resident lawyer and later judge, published in 1824 in Vermont's first *Gazetteer* by the historian Zadock Thompson (1796-1856).¹ The 36-square mile township of Calais was granted to Colonel Jacob Davis and Stephen Fay, both residents of Charlton, Massachusetts, and sixty-eight other men by the General Assembly of the Independent Republic of Vermont in 1781.² Abby Maria Hemenway (1828-1890), the renowned Vermont historian of the 19th century published a letter in 1882 by Calais residents James K. Tobey and Edwin E. Robinson. Tobey and Robinson speculated that the town was named by Colonel Davis, a principal proprietor in the grants of both Montpelier and Calais, because Davis "had become prejudiced against the custom, so common among the settlers, of giving the name of the old home to the new, and wishing to avoid this in his selection of names, his attention was naturally drawn to France, rather than England, by her attitude toward this country at that time, and perhaps, also by thought of a prior claim upon *Verd Mont* through her daring and gallant son Champlain. And, so it came about that two of the beautiful old cities of France had namesakes in the Green Mountain

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Wilderness".³ Esther Swift, a twentieth-century historian of Vermont place names, reported that Davis's son-in-law speculated that Davis picked "French names" for Montpelier and Calais "because there was great enthusiasm in this country over France's aid during the Revolution". In 1781, the Calais Township was granted along with 42 other towns, the most granted in any year of the Republic of Vermont.⁴ By the mid 18th century, southern New England was full of farms and limited opportunities, Vermont attracted these immigrants with cheap land and no taxes.

Within a month of the official Republic charter in 1781, the proprietors began meetings in Charlton, Massachusetts, from where many would emigrate. Proprietors were non-resident land speculators who obtained charters and often sold lots to settlers and drew gridded land divisions on original town maps often with no knowledge of the topographic character of the town. In the summer of 1787, Abijah, Asa and Peter Wheelock cleared the forests near Kents Corner and returned the following spring with four more men from Charlton to build the first log dwellings. The next year the first proprietors meeting was held at the new house of Peter Wheelock (1750-1820). The first families settled in the spring of 1789 and the Wheelocks raised large families. Calais historian Marcus Warren Waite reported that in the first Vermont census, taken just one month after the independent Republic of Vermont became the fourteenth state to join the United States in 1791; there were three Wheelock farms with 23 inhabitants out of a total of 45 inhabitants for the entire town of Calais.⁵

In 1794, Joel Robinson (1772-1831), also from Charlton, settled at Kents Corner. Robinson married Rachel Stevens in Charlton in 1797 and later that year was appointed hay warden in Calais. Joel and Rachael produced six children, all born in Calais. In 1798, Colonel Caleb Curtis from Charlton and Captain Abdiel Bliss and Remember Kent from Rehoboth, Massachusetts settled in Calais. Calais born historian Dorman B. E. Kent summarized that thirty-six of

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the original settlers came from Charlton, thirty-three from Rehoboth and seventeen from Brookfield, Massachusetts making these three towns equal to seventy percent of the total settlers between 1787 and 1809.⁶

Remember Kent (1775-1855) was elected a captain in the local militia and his descendants became prominent in business and town affairs. Remember Kent married Rachael Bliss in 1799 and acquired 80 acres in the southerly part of town lot number 46 of the first division and later acquired part of lot number 47. Remember's wife Rachael was the daughter of Calais pioneer Captain Abdiel Bliss (1740-1803) and she received 75 acres in lot number 50, of the first division, as a gift from her father. By 1800 Remember Kent owned an extensive farm of more than 155 acres at the junction of lot numbers 46, 47, 50 and 51.⁷ In 1797 Remember Kent built a log house, at what would later be named Kents Corner, and about 1810 it was relocated less than a ¼ mile east. Kent's first home would later be redesigned into a Cape Cod form, be called the 'Pioneer Cottage' and that structure is now part of the house at property #13.

For the purposes of this National Register Nomination the period of significance begins when the first roads in Kents Corner, blazed trails cut from the land that connected farm to farm, were established to accommodate settlement around 1800.⁸ The junction of two major roads (the north-south road, later named the Old West Church Road running southward and the Robinson Cemetery Road running northward, and the east-west road, named Kent Hill Road), met on land owned by Remember Kent. The area around this significant crossroads was named for Remember Kent and his descendants and came to be known as Kents Corner.

Abijah Wheelock (1764-1846), one of the first of several members of Wheelocks to settle in Calais, built a log cabin in 1788 southeast of Kents Corner (#2E). Captain Abdiel Bliss (1740-1805), a Revolutionary War veteran, cleared the forest in seven years for seven farms, which he

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gifted to his seven children. A monument to Captain Bliss, in the cemetery (#29A) of the Old West Church, commemorates this remarkable achievement. Colonel Caleb Curtis (1770-1836) settled west of Kents Corner around Curtis Pond in Maple Corner and four of his seven daughters married four of the seven Kent brothers: Polly married Ira Kent, Fanny married Abdiel Kent, Laura married John Van Rensselaer Kent and Minerva married Ezekiel Kent. The Bliss, Curtis, Kent, Robinson and Wheelock families were the social nucleus of a place that in subsequent years was called Kents Corner. Fertile productive soils, water power, and access to a rudimentary road network gave economic advantages to these families.

By 1800 Calais grew ten fold to 443 inhabitants living in 74 dwellings; the largest families were the Bliss Family with eight farms and the Wheelock Family with six farms in the Kents Corner neighborhood.⁹ Settlers were motivated to establish family farms in a mature forested landscape on the hills of Calais and this still rural landscape was shaped for two hundred years by families who were looking for an opportunity to make a living on the bedrock of New England.

The Kent Family

The Kent family was active in agriculture, industry, commerce, government, religion, conservation and preservation for many generations. Remember and Rachel Bliss Kent had eight children between 1799 and 1817: Remember Jr., Rachel Bliss, Ira, Abdiel, George, Ezekiel, John Van Rensselaer, and Samuel Newell. Remember's first son, Remember Kent, Jr. (1799-1881) married Delia Tucker in 1825 and after her death in 1860, he married Lucy White Goodell in 1861. Remember's daughter, Rachael Bliss Kent (1800-1897) married Aaron Tucker. Remember's second son, Ira Kent (1803-1898) married Polly Curtis in 1831 and following his father's death in 1855 they lived in the Remember Kent House (#21). Remember's third son, Abdiel Kent (1805-1887) built the Abdiel Kent House (#1) and later

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the Kent Hotel (#1), married Fanny Curtis in 1846, and after her death, married Lucy A. Bliss in 1859. Remember's fourth son, George Kent (1807-1885) married Mehitable Hill. Remember's fifth son, Ezekiel Kent (1811-1893) married Minervia Curtis in 1836. Remember's sixth son, John V. R. Kent (1813-1892) married Laura Curtis in 1844, and five years after her death, married Catherine Bliss Morse in 1856. Remember's seventh son Samuel Newell died as a result of a fall from a horse (1817-1835).¹⁰ Remember Kent's children and their marriages extended the Kent family into the commercial, religious and social life of the neighborhood.

Historic Architecture in the District

Kents Corner Historic District is significant under National Register Criteria C for a concentration of Greek Revival style buildings, the prevailing architectural style of the 19th century in Vermont. This unity of style is one of the most important visual components giving cohesion and architectural order to what is appreciated as the New England aesthetic in the district. These buildings obeyed constructions of tested stability and common usage and were genuinely appreciated by their builders and owners.

Pioneer dwellings of temporary logs or rough boards on hewn timber frames were soon replaced by permanent clapboarded post-and-beam frame houses and "their replacement was regarded as proof of progress" in Calais.¹¹ The structural system concealed within these houses is either; a post and beam, mortise-and-tenon frame house with horizontal board siding, or a post and beam, mortise and tenon frame house with vertical plank walls.¹² Depending on the time of arrival, Calais settlers experienced a three-house progression: rustic shelter, log house or frame house. Hemmway credits Bucklin Slayton, a master carpenter who "set out" many of the frame dwelling-houses and stores of Montpelier and Calais, with introducing the 'square rule' method of construction in the late 1820s that superceded the old 'scribe rule' method of framing a

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building. The new 'square rule' method of framing produced a frame that tended toward standardization of parts. Introduction of the 'square rule' did not do away with the traditional mortise-and-tenon method of joining timbers; it merely standardized the procedure so that each joint was no longer a unique feature and the structure was erected faster.¹³

The earliest houses surviving in the historic district are examples of the Cape Cod form of architecture which were later refashioned into the Greek Revival style. The residents of Calais wanted their buildings "to appear suitably dignified" and "this meant formal as opposed to rustic, symmetry of façade and plan as opposed to asymmetry, and (their) dwellings looked more like public buildings than the cottages of farm folk that most of them were".¹⁴ Most farmers confined their stylistic choices to a simple vernacular version of this classical Greek Revival architectural vocabulary.¹⁵ The earliest dwellings soon gave way to the fashion of remodeling with Greek Revival details (#s 1, 3, 17, 21, 28, 30). In the later half of 19th century Calais builders modified their constructions by introducing simplified techniques associated with the balloon-frame system of construction using dimensional milled lumber.¹⁶ The substantial early houses rested on long large granite blocks, called capstones, for the upper section of fieldstone foundation walls.

By the 1830s the Greek Revival style was spreading throughout Vermont, popularized in part by newly published handbooks for carpenters. Greek Revival became the official state architecture with Ammi B. Young's (1798-1874) design of the Vermont State House in 1838, a masterpiece of this popular style. Inspired by the ancient architecture of Greece that had been adopted by the popular culture, the Greek Revival style was selected for local houses and churches. In Calais, most of the stylistic emphasis is on the main entry, a paneled door flanked by pilasters and usually surrounded by a full transom light. The surviving Greek Revival houses in

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the district are the work of local joiners and carpenters who continued craft traditions passed on by experienced builders.

In the 1830s, 1840s and 1850s, buildings were constructed or remodeled in the district in the Greek Revival style (#s 1, 2, 3, 7, 9, 12, 17, 18, 21, 24, 27, 28, 29, 30, 34, 35). Classic Cottages (#s 12, 27, 35) were an evolution of the earlier Cape Cod form that received Greek Revival detailing and new floor plans. Likewise the Old West Church (#29) and the Christian Church/Calais Town Hall (#7) are topped with classically detailed steeples. After the Civil War, Greek Revival-inspired houses continued to be built (#s 8, 22). The Salem Goodenough House (#34), the Murray A. Kent House (#24), and the Josephine M. Kent House (#22) feature a two-story sidehall plan with a side entrance hall and parlor in the front of the house. The Elon Robinson House (#18) features symmetrical front porch entrances. In some cases the architectural detail of the main house is diminished on the little house and further diminished on the back house and the barn.¹⁷

By the mid 19th century, the vernacular-classical tradition was the overwhelming selection for the articulation of most buildings in Kents Corner. Farmers built in two traditions: the tradition of permanence, involving a high degree of building maintenance, reuse and preservation; and the tradition of change, involving the practices of building modification, alteration and rehabilitation. Buildings were valued and often moved and reused. The architectural tradition of permanence was balanced by the equally strong tradition of change or impermanence. The buildings that were reused were not saved in a spirit of "nostalgic preservationism", but were unceremoniously adapted in a practical no-nonsense spirit of farm improvement and modernization.¹⁸

Historic Agriculture in the District

Kents Corner Historic District is significant for a concentration of agricultural resources that represent the

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dominant economic pursuit during the 19th century in Calais. Land making and agricultural patterns were fundamental to developing the commercial, cultural and physical character of the landscape of Calais. The New England husbandman was called by the middle of the eighteenth century a cultivator, or an agriculturalist, and by 1820, a farmer.¹⁹

19th century agriculture around Kents Corner evolved from nearly-self-sufficient farms to surplus-based farms. Prosperity blessed farmers whose fathers paid for and cleared land, who had good soil, good luck with weather and prices, good stock, tight buildings, sharpened tools, and who got their chores and seasonal activities completed at the right times. Even with good luck and foresight, their non-agricultural skills contributed much to their prosperity.²⁰

In the language of agricultural historians, these farms were a system of mixed-husbandry, home-industry, and small-scale family farming. Mixed husbandry meant that Calais farmers never put all their agricultural eggs into a single product basket but harvested a variety of crops and animal products. Home industry relied on non-agricultural income to support the farm, including lumbering, clothing and craft occupations. Small-scale family farming with limited production and commitment to traditional cultural values has consistently characterized most of Vermont's agricultural community in all periods.

Farmers cherished the practices of their fathers and three principles guided their management of land and resources: 1) Although crops were frequently rotated to maintain soil fertility, overall field organization for farmers remained uniform throughout the 19th century because most farmers operated farms according to a system of mixed-farming, home-industry agriculture. Fields were most frequently planted in potatoes, corn, beans and a variety of grains, including oats, barley and wheat. Throughout the 19th century there were wide fluctuations in the production of these staples due to weather, soil quality, crop failures,

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personal preferences and market conditions. 2) Grazing animals were pastured and kept out of plowing and mowing fields, so that the grain or hay might be harvested for winter consumption or sold for profit. 3) The woodlot was an important economic unit, supplying a winter crop of timber and firewood.²¹ The Vermont farmer is referred to as a 'summer farmer, winter woodsman' and the farm year is an endless cycle of seasonal activities.²²

In 1842 Judge Wheeler's account of agriculture was published in Thompson's *Gazetteer*. At this time, Calais participated in the Vermont sheep boom and farm livestock consisted mainly of sheep (5,409), cattle (2,919), swine (666) and horses (252). Grain production consisted of bushels of oats (18,473), Indian corn (5,089), wheat (3,630), buckwheat (1,394), rye (578), and barley (152). Other farm products included maple sugar (24,420 pounds) potatoes (24,246), wool (14,160 pounds), and hay (5,899 tons).²³ After 1832 livestock and staples not consumed on the farm could be traded for goods at the I. & A. Kent General Store (#1) at Kents Corner.

Between Wheeler's account in 1842 and the agricultural census of 1850 we can see changes on the agricultural landscape. By 1850 there were 157 farms with an average of 119 acres that supported more milk cows and horses, and fewer sheep, cattle and hogs. In 1849 these farms produced butter (97,780 pounds) and cheese (63,065 pounds). Thirty years later in 1879, the farms produced much more butter (205,440 pounds) and less cheese (7,900 pounds).²⁴ During the second half of the 19th century, sheep farming for mutton and wool declined and was gradually eclipsed by the dairy industry that, with the arrival of the railroad and the opening of urban markets in southern New England, became Vermont's leading agricultural industry. The short-lived or fluctuating nature of many agricultural activities has rendered historic agricultural buildings particularly vulnerable.

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Historically, a typical farm in the district included a variety of land forms: farmstead (front yard, door yard, kitchen garden, barnyard), orchard (apples, plums, pears), plowed fields (corn, oats, potatoes, wheat, etc.), meadows (hay), pasture (grazing), woodlot (lumber, firewood), sugar bush (maple sugar), gravel pit (sand, gravel) and swamp, pond or cedar grove. Farm layout was not random; rather, it was carefully planned around topology and land quality with an eye toward an efficient farming operation. Farmsteads were a cluster of buildings that included a farmhouse and main barn, as well as several outbuildings: animal shelters, produce storage structures, vehicle storage structures, domestic structures and often a home-industry workshop.²⁵ Field patterns, hedgerows, stone walls, and fence lines for enclosing livestock still mark property boundaries in the Kents Corner Historic District.

Three intact farmsteads are the 150.1 acre property surrounding the Elon Robinson House (#18), the 112.25 acre property surrounding the Lewis Wood House (#27) and the 183.5 acre property surrounding the Abdiel Bliss House (#28). The farmstead historically associated with the Joseph W. E. Bliss House (#33) was divided and its two historic barns are owned by the builder of five non-contributing houses (#s 32, 36, 38, 40 and 41) in the district.

Barns “celebrated common engineering” and are the “traditional symbol for the agrarian values and life-style of its builders.”²⁶ The architectural progression from side-door English barns, to gable-door New England barns, to high-drive Dairy barns of the late 19th century is illustrated in the district. Internally most barns have undergone continuous periods of remodeling. There are ten historic barns in the district:

- ☐ Joseph W. E. Bliss Barn (#32E) an English style field barn constructed c. 1835,
- ☐ A. Bliss Barn (#28A) an English style barn constructed c. 1840, with additions.
- ☐ Lewis Wood Barn (#27B) an English style barn constructed c. 1850, with a wagon shed addition.

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- ☐ Leroy A. Kent Barn (#2B), a gable-front New England field barn constructed c. 1850.
 - ☐ Leroy A. Kent Barn (#2C) a gable-front New England field barn constructed c. 1850 and converted to a garage.
 - ☐ Elon Robinson Barn (#18A) a gable-front New England bank barn constructed c. 1855 and enlarged with the addition of another barn.
 - ☐ A. Bliss Barn (#28B) a gable-front New England barn constructed c. 1860, with side-bay addition, exterior silo and milk house addition.
 - ☐ Ira Kent Barn (#1A) a gable-front New England bank barn constructed c. 1870 with additions removed.
 - ☐ Josephine M. Kent Barn (#22A) a gable-front New England bank barn constructed c. 1875.
 - ☐ Joseph W. E. Bliss Barn (#32C) a gable-door covered high-drive Dairy barn constructed in 1888, with detached milk house.

In addition to these barns, surviving agricultural outbuildings include a wagon shed (#30A), a machinery and vehicle storage shed (#18B), a tractor shed (#8B) and several woodsheds. Most of the historic agricultural outbuildings in the district have disappeared from the landscape. There are two modern sugar houses (#s 28E, 42A) in the district.

Historic Industry in the District

Kents Corner Historic District is significant for a concentration of early industrial resources that represent the importance of the economic sector during the 19th century in Calais. In addition to agricultural endeavors, the brothers Ira (1803-1898), Abdiel (1805-1887), and J. V. R. Kent (1813-1892) were the most successful businessmen at Kents Corner in the 19th century with extensive real estate holdings and ownership in a variety of businesses.

Prior to the establishment of industry in Calais, the settlers brought seed and grain from grist mills in settled towns to the south, Williamstown, Brookfield and Royalton, at distances of 30 miles or more. The first farmers harvested and transported grain fifteen miles south to a grist mill in Williamstown. In 1792 Calais proprietors offered "200 acres of land to any person who would build a corn (grist) mill and a saw mill". This land bounty for mills encouraged settlement and served loggers and grain farmers.

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In 1793 the Proprietors accepted a grist mill and saw mill constructed by Col. Jacob Davis and Samuel Twiss erected at Calais Center, at the falls on Dugar Brook northeast of Gospel Hollow, just beyond the northeast corner of the historic district.²⁷ Davis and Twiss combined resources to acquire a water-power site and an upright saw for the mill. Sawmills civilized the land and their mills were conveniently situated in the geographic center of the new town, that came to be known as Calais Center. This first Calais sawmill operated for over 75 years.²⁸

As a byproduct of homesteading, another local industry emerged when Lemuel Perry made potash in Gospel Hollow. Potash (potassium carbonate) processed from wood ash was important for manufacturing soap, glass, gunpowder, textiles and bleach.²⁹ About 1810 Perry moved the operation up the Dugar Brook and continued business until 1825. Forest products included timber, firewood, maple sugar and handmade shingles.

Early mills were the economic link between farmer, commerce, and industry. Mostly the builders of mills were the millers themselves but also during the 19th century, some joiners and carpenters specialized as millwrights. The expertise of millwrights, craftsmen and lumbermen together initiated a wooden age in Vermont that by 1840 listed 1,018 sawmills.³⁰ In Calais, early industries were recorded by Shubael Wheeler for Thompson's *Gazetteer* in 1824. Wheeler reported that "timber on the streams is mostly hemlock, spruce and pine; on the higher lands, maple, beech, etc."³¹ Other timber included fir, tamarack, ash, elm, poplar, basswood, and birch, and the demand for construction lumber initiated other saw mills.

Joel Robinson (1772-1832), a resident of Kents Corner since 1795, built the Robinson Sawmill (#20) in 1803, on the Curtis Brook running just north of Kents Corner, on land acquired from Remember Kent. This upright sawmill supplied lumber for the earliest houses and all types of buildings in the neighborhood. The sawmill was dependent

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on rainfall that fed into Curtis Pond, down Curtis Brook and eventually into the small mill pond west of the mill. For this reason the operation was often referred to as a 'thunderstorm mill'. The construction of this timber-frame water-powered upright sawmill was a technological improvement over log building construction. The power mechanism consisted of an overshot water wheel, set at the fieldstone dam, which powered a horizontal shaft fitted with a crank to drive the saw frame up and down through a connecting rod called a pitman, after the sawyers they historically replaced. The improved upright sawmill was a straight saw blade mounted in a wood frame that moved up and down vertically. While Joel Robinson waited for sufficient water to accumulate in the mill pond, he kept busy with his principal pursuit, daily farm activities associated with agriculture. A Woodworking Shop was built north of the brook, and the original Robinson Farm (#18) was north up the hill. Farmers delivered logs with horses and oxen to the mill yard on the south side of the mill. A sawyer and helper custom cut beams, boards, planks, and other dimensional lumber during spring and summer and left the mill unattended during fall and winter with only occasional maintenance. At Joel Robinson's death in 1832, his son Elon (1809-1863) continued producing lumber until the mill and three acres were purchased by Ira and Abdiel Kent in 1837. The Kents operated the sawmill for sixty years.³² For construction of the Old West Church (#29), large timbers were hand hewn on site and 36" spruce boards used by joiners and carpenters probably came from the Robinson Sawmill (#20) or the Joshua Bliss Sawmill (#34A).

The Joshua Bliss Sawmill (#34A) was built in 1824 at the outlet of Bliss Pond at the south end of the historic district. The mill was rebuilt about 1840 by Jesse White (1798-1872) (#35)³³ and operated into the 20th century. A Woodworking Shop, just east of the mill, appears on the 1858 map. Salem Goodenough (1796-1886), who lived across the road, was a carpenter and joiner and may have

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owned the mill in the 1850s to 1880s.³⁴ Worked granite foundation stones for the sawmill are visible in Bliss Brook and the former mill is now an historic archaeological site.

Calais had several modest-sized water privileges on streams where mills with machinery were constructed in the first decades of settlement.³⁵ In 1824 Shubael Wheeler reported a nail factory, three grist mills, seven saw mills, two smut mills, two clover mills, two distilleries, two potashes, two trip hammer shops, one carding machine and one store.³⁶ These early industries found a stable market in the settled farming community around Kents Corner.

In 1876 Kent replaced the original upright saw in the Robinson Sawmill (#20) with a new portable sawmill, a state-of-the-art circular saw. The Lane "00" model sawmill was fitted with an extra bed for the carriage that enabled the saw to cut logs up to forty feet. The sawmill machinery was manufactured by the Lane Manufacturing Company of Montpelier, a Vermont company that developed into the leading manufacturer of sawmills in the northeastern United States. The mill was outfitted with a Lane shingle mill and a bolting saw to cut short logs.

At this time, the overshot waterwheel was replaced by an iron gate, wood penstock and steel scroll-case water turbine to power all the machinery in the mill, because the higher speed requirements of the circular saw mandated the use of a turbine. The 'celebrated Barre Turbine Water Wheel', manufactured by the Smith, Whitcomb and Cook Company of Barre, was also installed in 1876 to power the mill. This sawmill and turbine are still in the mill and are in working condition. Calais resident Allen Morse, in a letter to Abby Hemenway, reported that the Kent Sawmill was "in good repair" in 1882. The mill continued under the ownership of I. & A. Kent, and later their sons, for sixty years, until it was sold in 1897.³⁷

Calais historian Jill Mudgett characterized Abdiel Kent as a 19th century 'entrepreneur' who was "involved in a mixture of industry, real estate, and farming, both in Calais

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and in neighboring towns". While men of his father's generation concentrated on farming, Kent became concurrently a farmer, a merchant and a manufacturer.³⁸ Abdiel traveled to New Hampshire and Massachusetts, before returning to Calais in 1827, and by 1829 had opened a Shoe Making Shop at Kents Corner.³⁹ Kent's 1 ½ story Shoe Shop was built south of the present Kent Museum (#1) facing the Old West Church Road and stood until about 1910. Soon after his homecoming about 1830 Abdiel constructed his first dwelling, the Abdiel Kent House (#1), a single-story Cape Cod form house, near the southeast corner at Kents Corner.

Abdiel Kent operated the Boot and Shoe Shop year-round and delivered hundreds of pairs of footwear to merchants in Montpelier - the shire town, the state capitol, and the nearest commercial center. Kent was a 'shoe manufacturer' and shoe production on this scale depended on the labor of hired workers. While Kent employed both men and women, apprentices and wage laborers, locals and newcomers, boarders and outworkers, the majority of his laborers were young, unmarried men from Calais or nearby communities, many of whom boarded with Kent while working in the shop for wages. Kent's young journeymen entered a rural community where agricultural demands were answered and where social, civic and educational interests often took precedence over industrial ones - a manufacturing environment where, in short, cash-poor and landless young men found benefits they measured in more than monetary terms.⁴⁰

In 1837, the business was renamed the Ira & Abdiel Kent Boot and Shoe Manufacturers and continued for about forty years.⁴¹ The shop was organized during a period of transformation, as the earlier system of apprenticeship training slowly gave way to an emerging industrialism based on factory production and wage labor. In 1860, the factory employed four men and one woman who used hand tools and a foot-powered sewing machine to combine leather soles, sides, uppers and calf skins in the manufacture of \$ 3,000

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worth of boots and shoes.⁴² In 1870 the factory employed four men, year round, who used hand tools, a sewing machine and a pegging machine to manufacture 1400 boots valued at \$ 6,400 and 100 shoes valued at \$ 200.⁴³

Kents' footwear business was complemented by harness making from 1842 until about 1868. Kent took hides in trade, delivered them to local tanners and then Abdiel's workers made shoes, harnesses, and bridles, necessities for every farmer in Calais. In 1860 Ira and Abdiel Kent's Harness and Saddlery business employed two men who used hand tools and machinery to make hardware for 50 harnesses (bridles, collars, saddles and breechings) worth \$ 1,000 and \$ 150 worth of other leather items.⁴⁴ Account books from 1839 to 1852 recorded at least fifty-five men employed during that period in the manufacture of footwear and harness equipment. The vital local industry of shoe making was "all but motionless" about 1880 and discontinued being a source of employment.⁴⁵

The Kent Brick Kiln (#6) located on Kent Hill Road in Gospel Hollow, which was recorded in Abdiel Kent's account records as early as 1833, appears in a list of manufacturers until 1868 and also on the Beers map of 1873.⁴⁶ Gospel Hollow provided an ideal site for constructing a brick kiln: a clay deposit, fresh water from Dugar Brook, clean fine sand, abundant sources of cordwood, a production area and access to the road. Bricks, small baked clay units laid in mortar, were in demand for the construction of building foundations, walls, fireplaces and chimneys. The land in Gospel Hollow is a natural site for drying the hand-molded bricks and building a kiln to burn or bake the stacked bricks. The historical record has not provided evidence for the working of the kiln; however the kilns were most likely fueled by wood for burning, or firing the bricks. Houses in the historic district that were constructed of bricks from the Kent Brick Kiln are the Kent Hotel (#1) and the Joseph W. E. Bliss House (#33). The brick bonding system on both buildings is the American Common Bond.⁴⁷ Many other

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brick buildings have survived in Calais outside this historic district and were possibly constructed of bricks from this kiln. Today the Kent Brick Kiln (#6) is an historic archaeological site in Gospel Hollow on the eastern edge of the historic district.

The Kent Blacksmith Shop (#12) was built in 1835 across the road from the Kent Hotel (#1) that was then under construction. Abdiel Kent contracted George W. Tewksbury to build a blacksmith shop and in exchange, Kent agreed to board Tewksbury during construction and to pay him a mixture of cash, boots and shoes, grain and meat.⁴⁸ Tewksbury was a blacksmith and wheelwright and responded to the seasonal needs of his customers, particularly farmers. Customary work of the shop included making and repairing agricultural and household implements, vehicle repair, and shoeing of horses and oxen. Joseph Persons, Jr. was listed as a blacksmith as early as 1872 and Joseph Persons, Sr. was a blacksmith in Kent's shop in the 1880 Census.⁴⁹

In 1844, Abdiel Kent with his brother Ira, and L. Bancroft, constructed a starch making factory on Dugar Brook northeast of Gospel Hollow that operated until 1866. Starch, made from potatoes, was in demand for the sizing or finishing of cloth and for making potato whiskey.⁵⁰ In the 1860 Census, the Kent and Bancroft Starch Factory operated only two months a year, after the potato harvest, and processed, with water power, 4,000 bushels of potatoes into 15 tons of starch worth \$ 1,120.⁵¹

In 1847 John Robinson, son of Joel Robinson, began a grist mill and machine shop at the 'Red Shop' in Maple Corner and it was operated until 1852 by machinist Nathan Bancroft. In 1852 the Kent brothers acquired the Red Shop with a grist mill, and leased it to various men who made horse rakes, cut shingles, ground grain, and did general repair work until 1902. The Kent partnership owned: the Norcross Mill and a general store in Woodbury; a general store, woolen factory, mills and hotel in Craftsbury; and the

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Brown Sawmill (1811-1841) in the northwest part of Calais. Ira and Abdiel Kent continued as successful business partners until 1867.⁵²

Historic Commerce in the District

Kents Corner Historic District is significant as the first commercial center of Calais where the Ira & Abdiel Kent General Store (#1) was the focus of commerce in the neighborhood for over eight decades (1832-1916). The Kent family's involvement in industry and commerce meant that Calais residents could access, with one trip to the rural-industrial crossroads at Kents Corner, a more diverse selection of goods and services than would have been available in a single rural mercantile.

In 1832 Abdiel Kent enlarged the existing shoe shop and installed "a small stock of staple dry good and groceries"; it was the first general store in town and would be the only store in Calais for sixteen years.⁵³ Increased demand led to the building of a larger store. The Ira and Abdiel Kent General Store (#1) was built in 1854 to increase revenue for both the shoe shop and the small store. The new store was stocked with an assortment of goods and many of the young shoemakers purchased items on credit. At Kents Corner, traditional patterns of local, non-cash exchanges between households persisted in this rural Vermont farming community. Even in their myriad productive activities, Vermont rural households were almost never completely self-sufficient. Abdiel Kent's account books recorded the prices paid for goods and services at his store and illustrate the increasing reliance by farmers on sources outside their farm for goods and services. At Kents Corner neighbors could obtain everything, for cash or trade, from boots and shoes to axes, boards, bricks, cloth, grain and tea. In order to obtain these goods, farmers began producing surplus agricultural items for both their household and for trade. By accepting as payment a variety of agricultural products, Kent was able to consolidate the local supply of goods and services into one

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location, his general store. Utilitarian, functional household goods dominated Kent's trade, necessities easily produced at the local level. Calais historian Jill Mudgett, summarized, "Kent's store acted largely as a trading post, a place where farm-produced goods, labor and small amounts of cash were exchanged for a mixed stock of locally-produced goods and supplies Kent brought in from local and non-local suppliers."⁵⁴ As a common practice, salesmen and peddlers came directly to the Kent's store to sell baked goods, tinware, brooms, baskets, stoneware, agricultural tools, garden seeds and patent medicines.⁵⁵

The Kent General Store (#1), continued by Abdiel and Ira and their relatives, was the focus of commerce at Kents Corner into the 20th century. Leroy Abdiel Kent (1843-1911), Ira Kent's second son, operated the Kent-owned general store in Craftsbury from 1868 till 1870 and then the family-owned store at Kents Corner. In 1873 Leroy Kent became the Postmaster and advertised "staple and fancy dry goods, boots, shoes, hats, caps, groceries, Queensware, hardware, nails and glass, drugs and medicines, paints, oils, dye stuffs, family medicines, perfumery and notions". The "goods were sold cheap for cash" and the Kent Store took country produce in exchange for goods.⁵⁶ Management of the Kent General Store passed to Abdiel's third son Herbert A. Kent (1864-1916) and the store closed after his death in 1916.⁵⁷ The Herbert Kent Farm, with 190 acres and many of the buildings at Kents Corner, was sold out of the Kent family in 1916.⁵⁸

The Kent Hotel (#1) was constructed for Abdiel Kent between 1835 and 1837 and was connected to his original c. 1830 house. This architectural landmark is a 2½-story timber-frame and brick building constructed as a Georgian plan house that features elements of the Greek Revival style. The presence of the building, with brick walls, granite details and four brick chimneys, is a landmark on this rural landscape. The granite foundation was hauled from Barre, brick came from the Kent Brick Kiln (#6) in Gospel Hollow,

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the iron work came from the Kent Blacksmith Shop (#12) across the road, the timbers and finished wood came from the Robinson Sawmill (#20) just north of Kents Corner. The moldings and detailed woodwork were made on site. The windows and blinds came from a factory in North Calais.⁵⁹

Between 1837 and 1847, the Kent Hotel was a family residence, a hotel for stagecoach travelers and a boarding house for Abdiel's employees. The Kent Hotel was a stagecoach stop for Concord coaches on the post road that originated at the state capitol in Montpelier. The post road proceeded north from Kents Corner to Woodbury, Hardwick, Greensboro and up to Derby Line before crossing into Canada.⁶⁰ Kent offered accommodations and the hotel was a convenient place to exchange teams of tired horses for fresh horses kept at Abdiel Kent's Barns (#1c). The tavern went beyond providing meals and lodging to occasional passersby; it was also a place where people gathered to exchange news and opinions, or to engage in personal business. The Kent Hotel was closed to travelers in 1847, probably because of Abdiel's first marriage to Fanny Curtis in 1846 and the arrival of their first two children, Murray Abdiel in July 1847 and Ella Fanny in January 1849.⁶¹

The Kents were active in family-owned agricultural and commercial enterprises throughout the 19th century. Shubael Wheeler's 1840 letter about industry and commerce was published in Thompson's *Gazetteer* in 1842. At this time, I. & A. Kent operated the only general store in Calais even though the local industry included eleven sawmills and five grist mills.⁶² Remember Kent, Jr. (1799-1881) was a farmer that worked as a millwright in the construction of buildings. John Van Rensselaer Kent (1813-1892), may have lived in the Leroy A. Kent House (#2) and was the foreman in the family-owned shoe factory (1833-1848).⁶³ Ezekiel Kent (1811-1893) and George Kent (1807-1885) were successful farmers. Ira Richardson 'Rich' Kent (1833-1875), Ira Kent's first son, joined the family firm at age 20 and "assumed the entire management of the mercantile business of I. & A.

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Kent” until about 1859 when he started a business of buying livestock for markets in Massachusetts until 1865. Murray A. Kent (1847-1915), Abdiel Kent’s first son, managed his father’s boot and shoe business until about 1880.⁶⁴ At Kents Corner, Remember and Rachel Kent’s children started farms, industries and businesses and the cornerstone of the family enterprise, the Kent General Store, continued into the second decade of the 20th century.

Historic Religion in the District

Kents Corner Historic District is significant in the religious history of Calais and prominent cultural resources remind us of this legacy. Two country churches in the district are local landmarks on the rural landscape and architecturally they are excellent examples of the Greek Revival style. Both have been well preserved. The Old West Church (#29) and the Christian Church (#7) “tell us who we are. What we believe defines us, just as the churches we build symbolize our spiritual beliefs in physical form. As the most basic unit of civic architecture, churches also are landmarks of our history and sign posts of our aspirations”.⁶⁵

Vermont did not decree a particular denomination as the established state church; each town, by majority vote could determine the denomination of its choice. Dedicated to the separation of church and state, in 1806 Vermont ended town church establishment and thereafter members of each church society had to pay for their own ministers and buildings.⁶⁶

The religious life of Calais was first recorded by Shubael Wheeler for Thompson’s *Gazetteer* in 1824. Wheeler wrote that there were five religious societies in town; Baptists, Congregationalists, Universalists, Methodists and Freewill Baptists, and “the greatest harmony prevails among them”. At this time, there were two preachers and one meetinghouse shared by all denominations. In his 1842 letter to Thompson, Wheeler adds that there is also a

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“Society of Free Enquirers”, which was organized in 1835, and the meeting house was “occupied alternatively by the different religious sects”.⁶⁷

From the first town settlement in 1787 to the framing of the Old West Church in 1823, Calais was served by a variety of religious elders who conducted services, married couples and baptized children. These frequently-itinerant elders held services in homes, barns or schoolhouses on a very occasional basis. Elders generally had no formal religious training, having learned their calling from older colleagues. It is hard to say that they had a ‘settled congregation’ in any modern sense, for their followers were often changing groups of people, moving to different parts of town or even out of town.⁶⁸

Meetinghouses that served secular and religious functions were popular during the late 18th and early 19th centuries. They were the symbolic focus of the settlement. Many of the towns consisted of a number of religious denominations, as “perhaps forty-five towns had a single house of worship and most of these were ‘Union’ meeting houses, occupied by two or more denominations, in proportion to contributions toward its construction or to number of taxpaying adherents”.⁶⁹

The First Universalist Society of Calais was organized in 1820 by fifty men mostly from the west side of town in the Maple Corner and Kents Corner neighborhoods.⁷⁰ In August 1823, a call was issued by Caleb Curtis, Medad Wright and Nathan Bancroft, to all substantial citizens from the west side of town, asking all interested in building a meeting house in Calais, to meet at the house of Medad Wright (#30). The First Meeting House Society was organized, a building lot purchased from Caleb Bliss, and a plan designed to build a meeting house “40 by 42 feet, 40 pews on the lower floor, 5 feet by 6 and 18 (pews) above (in the balcony) of the same size”. Payment for pews was offered in three equal installments, payable one-half in neat (cows, steers, oxen) cattle or grain. Pews were sold to prosperous families to

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finance construction and 'seating' was the process by which a hierarchy of spaces in the meetinghouse was assigned to town residents.

Lovell Kelton, a framer and resident of Calais, assembled large timbers to form the wooden skeleton of the building in the fall of 1823. When the building was originally framed there was a tower projection on the east elevation, supporting the steeple, but during construction the corners were filled out providing the building (#29) its present shape. During the next two years the meeting house was completed under the supervision of Mr. Griffin of Hardwick, Vermont. Officers, committees and members of the society appeared in Tobey and Robinson's letter to Hemenway's *Gazetteer* in 1882.⁷¹ Membership in the First Meeting House Society, mostly from the west side of Calais, was a communal rather than a denomination undertaking and its use followed a nondenominational pattern since.⁷² Calais historian Jill Mudgett's research revealed that "Calais records contain very little to suggest the kind of contention and dissent so often cited in scholarship on religion in early 19th century Vermont."⁷³

The meeting house, later named the Old West Church (#29), was dedicated as a Union Church in November 1825 and the cost of construction was \$2,005 gained from the sale of individual pew boxes. At a later date carriage sheds were built behind the church to shelter horses during church services.⁷⁴ In 1828 the first apportionment was made with use of the meeting house on Sundays divided as follows: "Baptists 10 Sabbaths (Sundays), Universalists 20, Congregationalists 9, Christians 6, Free Will Baptists 4 and Methodists 3. Twenty years later the division was Universalists 32, Congregationalists 7, Methodists 5, Baptists 4 and Christians 4 Sundays."⁷⁵

The Universalist faith, under the leadership of Colonel Caleb Curtis was the predominant religious movement responsible for organizing this church and their principal belief was the freedom of religious expression. Ira, Abdiel,

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and John V. R. Kent all married daughters of Caleb Curtis and they became officers of the Universalist Society. Abby Hemenway stated that “the Universalist element” had become such a force in the Kents Corner neighborhood of Calais, that by 1881, it was “entirely owned and controlled by this denomination”.⁷⁶ The Vermont historian Hamilton Child, writing in 1889, agreed with Hemenway’s assessment of the social position of the Universalists, “The Union church is now owned and controlled by them.” and added, “this has always been a liberal, moral, intelligent and independent neighborhood.”⁷⁷ Prior to 1882, about fifty Universalist ministers preached occasionally in Calais.⁷⁸ The church was used nearly every Sunday year round until 1860 when attendance declined, but Tobey and Robinson wrote in 1882 that “the pride of the present generation has induced them to keep in repair the work of their fathers”.⁷⁹

Calais-born historian Dorman B. E. Kent (1875-1951) agreed that the church was “used constantly” for the first 35 years until 1860, and until 1885 services were held with “considerable regularity”, but that since then “with the exception of a few Sundays in the summer, no preaching is heard within its walls”; and that it “has been exceptionally well cared for”.⁸⁰ Perhaps there was increased competition for religious services after the building of the East Calais Union Church (1848) and the Christian Church (#7) (1866) in Gospel Hollow. The meeting house was known as the ‘Old Church’, the ‘West Church’ and later the Old West Church (#29) because it served principally the residents on the west side of town. In addition to services the building was used for weddings and funerals, as well as lectures, concerts, organizational meetings and dramas. An organization known as the Ladies Union was organized in 1897 to support the maintenance of the church and when this organization dissolved, the Old West Church Association was formed in 1921 to see to the “preserving and keeping” of the church.⁸¹

The architecture of the Old West Church (#29) has been referred to by historian Edmund Sinott as “Originally

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Transitional, now Type III", a church of the first quarter of the 19th century. Its plain front and three entrance doors, framed with Greek Revival pilasters, are on the east elevation with a continuous cornice over the doors. Set back on the roof is a Greek Revival tower that features a wooden spire and a weathervane.⁸² The exterior of the church may have original colors: white-painted clapboards on three elevations and red-painted clapboards on the west or back wall.

On the interior, the first floor is the original plan with a raised pulpit at the west end and numbered box pews set throughout the space. The wooden pews display original painted numbers on the doors and a chart of original owners of each pew is framed in the vestibule. While boxed pews kept out cold drafts, winter parishioners brought foot stoves filled with hot coals or heated freestones. In 1831 six box pews were removed from the back of the first floor for the installation of two cast-iron box stoves with a long stove pipe running to the ceiling where a brick chimney was set in the attic. One of the current stoves was manufactured by Morrison & Tibbets of Troy, New York and has a patent date of 1850; and the other stove has an elaborate scroll pattern.⁸³

Above the pulpit are the words: *"REMOVE NOT THE ANCIENT LANDMARK WHICH THY FATHERS HAVE SET"*. This quotation is from Proverbs 22:28 and was selected from the Webster Bible translated by Noah Webster in 1833. Webster's translation of the ancient proverb was fashioned of cedar fronds and placed on the wall about 1899.⁸⁴ This proverb is referred to by local residents as sacred language and these words of wisdom are often quoted as a maxim for the gospel of historic preservation. Dorman B. E. Kent, Robert F. Bliss and Dennis Pocket supervised restoration work on the church in 1921; there was additional maintenance in 1938 and in subsequent years.⁸⁵ When a lightning bolt struck the rod of the steeple, there was a small fire that was quickly extinguished in the summer of 1953.

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In 1940 Vermont architectural historian Herbert Wheaton Congdon (1876-1965) wrote that neither the Old West Church (1825) nor the Meeting House at East Montpelier Center (1823) "is significant architecturally, but both have a strong nostalgic charm". Congdon later wrote the Calais church "is of unsophisticated design, but well and honestly built". Congdon's architectural assessment of these churches is too severe, as they are products of their time and significant for their simple architectural statements on the landscape. Congdon photographed the churches and found them "kept in repair by loving hands" and that "long years of worship by devout people have left their deep spiritual imprint".⁸⁶ Calais resident and author Louise Andrews Kent wrote in 1948 that "the Old West Church in Calais retains its original appearance as much as any New England meetinghouse. It still shines outside with white paint. Inside, the pine (sic) of the old box pews has mellowed to brown in pleasant contrast to the smoke-blue paint of gallery and pulpit".⁸⁷

The Old West Church Graveyard (#29A) was opened behind the church in 1826 because the religious belief was that a cemetery in the churchyard was hallowed ground.⁸⁸ Funerals were family and community rituals enacted on hallowed ground by people deeply cognizant of tradition. There is a variety of styles of stone monuments and the back row may contain graves of paupers, probably from the Town Poor Farm at the Medad Wright House (#30) just to the south of the cemetery.

The most prominent grave marker is the Bliss Monument, a cast bronze plaque set in a large boulder that was erected by descendants of Abdiel Bliss before 1932. The inscription reads: *Capt. Abdiel Bliss born Rehoboth, Mass., Dec. 15, 1740. Died in Calais June 10, 1805. His wife Lydia Smith born in Rehoboth, Mass. April 8, 1739, Died in Calais, VT, March 21, 1820. An officer of the Revolution, a leader of men, a pioneer of Calais where in seven years he cleared*

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seven farms for his children. Captain Bliss undoubtedly was helped in these efforts by his five sons and six daughters.⁸⁹

Universalism did not totally dominate the religious beliefs of the residents of Calais. The Christian Church, organized in 1810 with a membership of about fifty people, existed in Calais long before its church building (#7) was constructed in 1866 at Gospel Hollow. In 1850 Reverend Orrin Davis (1808-1897) was ordained and in 1851 began a pastorate that would last nearly five decades until his death in 1897.⁹⁰ The Christian congregation made plans to erect a church and in 1865 a subscription was started. The church was built on lot 45 of the first division, a lot set aside in the original lotting plan of the Town of Calais for public use. In 1866 the Christian Meeting House Vestry Society was formed “for the purpose of putting a basement under the Christian church now in the process of building . . . to be used at all times for civil and moral purposes but not to intrude with the usual religious meeting in the church above”. Funds from the sale of stock financed construction of the first floor for town meetings. Stock was sold at \$5 a share and between 50 and 60 stockholders raised at least \$600. In 1866 the building was constructed with the Vestry Society holding title to the first floor and the Christian Church to the second floor. When the town began holding annual Town Meetings in the vestry, the Vestry Society charged the town rent. Between 1877 and 1886 stockholders received a total return of 60% on their investment and over the years the stock was traded. By 1889 J. V. R. Kent had acquired 105 shares of stock and when the Town voted to buy the Vestry the stockholders received a final dividend of 79% of each dollar of capital stock. J. V. R. Kent was a successful businessman and over time collected shares of stock in the Association until owning a majority, resulting in profit when the Vestry was sold to the Town.⁹¹

After the death of Reverend Orrin Davis in 1897 no other pastor served the church for any length of time and the church was often referred to as the ‘Davis Church’. When

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religious services ceased c. 1910 the building was used for Town Meetings and it began to be thought of more as a community church than a denominational one. Town meetings were held in the Vestry until 1916 when the Selectmen voted to have their Town Meetings upstairs. The town gave the Ladies Home Mission, organized in 1882 under the leadership of Lucy Kent, permission to build a kitchen in the back of the Vestry. At that time, the Mission also accepted responsibility for the oversight of the building.⁹² Today the building is known as the Calais Town Hall (#7).

The Robinson Graveyard (#19) figures prominently in the religious life of the neighborhood as an early place to commemorate the dead. This large rural cemetery opened in 1814 and all the pioneer families are represented.⁹³ There was a gradual transition in the material and design of the grave markers, from the early use of slate and marble to the later use of granite. A variety of forms were selected, including perpendicular and horizontal tablets, footstones, and obelisks. The tombstones are decorated with inscriptions, epitaphs, biblical quotations and floral carvings that represent symbolism used to enrich the memorials. Several tombstones are hand-carved with a perpendicular square base, topped with a gable roof and a turned decorative urn. The most prominent structure in the cemetery is a Receiving Vault, constructed of granite blocks set into a mound near the road. This granite structure held coffins until the spring thaw and was commissioned by Ira Kent in 1888.⁹⁴ The Old West Church Graveyard and the Robinson Graveyard are outdoor museums of the stone carver's art that mark events of personal importance and historical interest. They represent the craftsmanship, materials, and burial customs of their period in the historic district.

Historic Government in the District

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Kent Corner Historic District is significant in the role of government in Calais. The town charter envisioned an agrarian, self-governing community whose inhabitants, not the government, held title to land. Private ownership and use of land were bundled with civic obligation to the community. The settlement of Calais “must be viewed in the context of a tension between a longing for individual private control of land in a garden – and individual economic security – and a communal forbearance in a wilderness – social security.” In all of their endeavors, they were “driven to seek both individual expression and covenanted communities”.⁹⁵ Neighbors joined together at Kents Corner, “a place on the land where a community is formed”.⁹⁶

Calais settlers found themselves living sequentially in Orange County (1781), Caledonia County (1792) and Jefferson County (1810), until the county name was fixed as Washington County in 1814. The first meetings of local government were held at annual town meetings beginning in 1788 at the home of Peter Wheelock. Wheelock’s house was the center of town activities for several years and at the first town meeting in 1795, he was elected Town Clerk and later became the first representative (1795-1799) from Calais to the State of Vermont. According to the Calais historian Marcus Waite, “Peter Wheelock was the leading man in the first ten years of Calais history”.⁹⁷

Annual Town Meetings were held in private homes and schoolhouses until 1839 when meetings were held in the new Town House (no longer standing) on Jack Hill.⁹⁸ When the vestry of the Christian Church (#7) became available in 1868 meetings at the Town House were abandoned and the annual town meeting, a venerable Vermont institution, was held in this church. After 1868 the church was also known as the Calais Town Hall (#7) and the annual town meeting is still held there today.⁹⁹

In the first decade of settlement the population of Calais increased nearly ten fold between 1790 (43 people) and 1800 (443 people) and nearly doubled in 1810 (841

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people). The population doubled again by 1840 (1709 people), but decreased in 1850 (1410 people) and this downward trend continued until the 1960 (684 people) census. Only recently in 2000 (1783 people) has the population increased back to the peak level of 1840.

Between 1791 and 1820 the Calais population increased dramatically from 45 to 1,111. As a measure of social control Vermont law allowed a procedure known as 'warning out' whereby the Selectmen could officially tell a family to move out of town because they were paupers and the Town did not want any financial responsibility for their care. From 1803 to 1817, 198 householders were warned out of Calais.¹⁰⁰ The Selectmen also 'hired out' paupers to various people who agreed to care for them at a given price and struggled for nearly four decades to find a better solution. In 1841 the Town appointed Jabez Mower as the first Overseer of the Poor and this position was later held by several members of the Kent family, including Abdiel Kent (1845, 1875-1877), Ira Rich Kent (1864), J. V. R. Kent (1865, 1881) and Herbert A. Kent (1906-1912).¹⁰¹

Three decades later in 1871, the Town appointed three Overseers, purchased the Medad Wright House (#30) to subsidize the cost of welfare and appointed a resident manager of the Town Poor Farm. The residents were a mixture of transients (people temporarily out of work or homeless) and permanents (chronically poor, as well as the handicapped, usually elderly and often with mental illnesses) with no one to turn to for help. One of the benefits of the agricultural poor farm, in addition to providing meaningful work, was that it produced income; potatoes, fresh meat, pigs and up to 1,000 pounds of butter in some years were sold from the farm. The town farm included a hundred acre woodlot that supplied lumber, bark, shingles, and cedar posts. In 1925 the Selectmen voted to designate this woodlot a Town Forest (#31) with the goal of managing this natural resource. William B. Greeley, chief of the U. S. Forest Service and an early proponent of sustained-yield harvesting

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and scientifically-based forestry, made a personal visit to Calais in the mid-1920s to inspect the Town Forest.¹⁰² Vermont historian Robert McCullough concluded that “this type of consistent but measured marketing of wood products suggests a utilitarian stewardship that recognized the renewable nature of woodlots and sought to sustain resources over a period of time. This conservation ethic is significant, too, because it is so firmly rooted in community welfare”.¹⁰³

The transition from agricultural poor farm to Town Forest was partly prompted by the rise of charity organizations and the creation of the Vermont Department of Public Welfare in 1923.¹⁰⁴ In 1926 tree warden Edward A. Lamphere reported stands of white pine, cedar, spruce, hemlock, fir and mixed hardwoods. Professional foresters harvested marketable timber and began transplanting fast-growing, commercially salable, coniferous types: red, scotch and white pine or Norway and white spruce. Calais has been a quiet steward of its three town forests that today peaceably accommodate wildlife habitat, protection of water supplies, cultivation of timber, ecological study and recreation. In 1955 Bliss Pond Town Forest (#31) was officially designated a Municipal Forest by the state and is permanently protected by conservation easements, with public access to the 120 acre forest, from the owner of the Medad Wright House (#30).¹⁰⁵

The Kent family was active in local government in the post office, town offices and representation in Vermont government. The first postmaster in Calais was the pioneer Gideon Wheelock (1771-1851) from 1816-1830 at Calais Center in Gospel Hollow. In 1849 Ira Kent established a post office in the Kent General Store (#1), and was postmaster for sixteen years. Ira was followed by Alfred Goodenough (1865), Benjamin P. White (1868), and Abdiel's son Leroy A. Kent (1873). In 1883 George W. S. Ide, Abdiel's son-in-law, was the postmaster at the store for five years until Leroy took the job back (1887) and continued until he was followed

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by Abdiel's son Oliver Howard Kent (1897), then George Kent (1901) and finally by Abdiel's son Herbert A. Kent (1904). In 1906 the post office was relocated to Maple Corner.¹⁰⁶ Vermont historian Abby Hemenway said of Ira Kent, that he "has held nearly all the offices in the gift of the town, and that he has served acceptably is shown in his continued re-elections".¹⁰⁷

Joshua Bliss, Edward Tucker and Jonas Comins were the first Selectmen in Calais. Abdiel Kent served on the select board for seven years, J. V. R. Kent served for five years, Ezekiel Kent served for two years, and Herbert A. Kent served for six years. Oliver H. Kent and George Kent served as Town Clerk and Town Treasurer. Abdiel Kent was the Vermont state representative in 1841-1842; his brother J. V. R. Kent served in 1862-1863 and Ira Kent's son Leroy A. Kent served in 1882-83.¹⁰⁸ Calais historian Weston A. Cate, Jr. recorded a list of men active in local government.¹⁰⁹

Calais men who participated in annual militia training also served in the Revolutionary War, War of 1812, Mexican American War, Civil War, Spanish American War, World War I and II, and other wars of the 20th century. Many veterans are honored in the Robinson Cemetery (#19), the Old West Church Cemetery (#29a), and the Soldier's Monument erected in 1921 at Memorial Hall (1886) in North Calais.¹¹⁰

Landscape in the Historic District

As architectural forms were expressed in the structures for agriculture, industry and commerce, a pastoral landscape evolved at Kents Corner that is remarkably similar to the landscape of today. This combination of natural and cultural resources conveys a sense of the historic landscape that was significant in the district from 1800-1955. Artists captured a romanticized view of alluring scenery and rural charm in the landscape around Kents Corner in the later part of the 19th century.¹¹¹

James Franklin Gilman (1850-1929) lived as an itinerant artist with families in central Washington County from 1872

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until 1891. He created paintings, sketches and etchings of local houses, farms, and village scenes, as well as people in oil, crayon, pen and ink, watercolor and charcoal. Gilman taught art at the Goddard Seminary in Barre, wrote about a philosophy of art and reproduced some of his art in etchings. Gilman devoted attention to people living in the built environment of houses, barns, fences and fields.

The majority of Gilman's work in Calais includes portraits of the Kent family during summers in the early 1880s. Two charcoal drawings, both entitled '*Kents Corners*', were done in 1882 and are valuable resources for interpreting the landscape of the late 19th century. '*Kents Corner-Sunday Afternoon*' is a southwesterly view showing three Kent brothers, Abdiel, Ira and John Van Rensselaer walking across their land. A second version, '*Kents Corner*' is a northeasterly view from a vantage point on Wheeler Hill. Both of the Gilman drawings of Kents Corner are valuable documents for their detailed representation of the buildings and landscape in the early 1880s. The early 1880s were good years for James Franklin Gilman, his paintings were commissioned and appreciated by the most affluent families in the community; he lived in their homes and shared their circle of friends. Gilman's pictures found favor with Vermonters who wanted an appealing representation of their property or family. Gilman's "passionate representation" of the rural landscape at Kents Corner would not attract the public's attention until 1951 when Louise Andrews Kent organized a Gilman exhibition at the Kent Museum (#1).¹¹²

In the process of creating a community, first and second generation residents created a landscape that shows the tensions between communal values and private interests.¹¹³ The classic agrarian landscape at Kents Corner escaped the industrialization and commercial growth that happened in the late 19th century ten miles south in Montpelier and Barre. At Kents Corner vestiges of the historic landscape continue into the 21st century. The surviving keepsakes (open fields, stone walls, maple trees

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and old barns) together constitute the vestiges of landscape that still serve Vermonters as the standard by which a new form on the landscape is judged. After the period of significance, amateur and professional designers alike continued to recreate the landscapes of the past with modern interpretations of log cabins, colonial houses and Greek Revival farmhouses. In the Kents Corner neighborhood “the detached house surrounded by land kept in equilibrium remains the spatial epitome of the ‘good life’”.¹¹⁴ Residents have remained faithful to the spatial values of their ancestors and local efforts to conserve this landscape seek an image of a rural, pre-industrial landscape that establishes a firmly rooted sense of place.

Conservation and Preservation in the Historic District

Residents of the Kents Corner neighborhood inherited the traditions of conserving natural resources and preserving cultural resources. Many of these resources were preserved by the stewardship of the remaining farmers in Calais. This legacy of memory is commemorated in the naming of Kents Corner after Remember and Rachel Kent and their descendants that pioneered this rural neighborhood in the 19th century. This pastoral landscape was captured in the ‘genre painting’ of James Franklin Gilman when he lived with the Kent family during summers in the early 1880s. The Bible verse painted over the pulpit about 1899 in the Old West Church (#29) “*REMOVE NOT THE ANCIENT LANDMARK WHICH THY FATHERS HAVE SET*” was scripture for the tradition of historic preservation. Ancestors were honored at the installation of the Bliss Monument (#29A) in the cemetery of the church.

Calais resident-historian Alma Davis Leonard (1854-1935), a great-granddaughter of the pioneer Abijah Wheelock, organized the dedication of the Wheelock Monument (#2E) in 1930 to commemorate the earliest pioneers of Kents Corner. She was “a prime mover in the founding of the Wheelock Family Association” and her

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research into local cemeteries and genealogy are invaluable documents preserved in the Town Clerk's vault. As a result of Alma's efforts the annual Wheelock picnic became 'Old Home Day' in Calais. In 1934 a history pageant, under the direction of Nora Mower Gallagher (1874-1955), depicted episodes from early town history and Calais historian Marcus Warren Waite (1882-1968) called the pageant "probably the most interesting and spectacular event ever enacted in town".¹¹⁵ In 1941 the Vermont Writers Project, a program in the federal Works Projects Administration, published a profile of the Green Mountain State that featured the state's architecture and landscape. The Old West Church, one of only two churches in the state featured in the prestigious publication, was illustrated as an example of the "simplicity that characterized rural churches of the period".¹¹⁶

In 1941 the Sesquicentennial Anniversary of the statehood of Vermont was celebrated at the annual town meeting in an address presented by Calais-born historian Dorman B. E. Kent (1875-1951), grandson of Abdiel Kent. Dorman spoke about town history, his childhood in Calais and his pride of growing up at Kents Corner.¹¹⁷ Dorman's parents, Murray Abdiel and Ruth Eaton Kent, moved to Montpelier when Dorman was twelve and he graduated from Montpelier Seminary in 1894. Dorman had a successful career at the National Life Insurance Company in Montpelier and devoted much of his life writing about the history of Calais. Dorman was a diarist, Unitarian, and Mason, as well as, the librarian, curator and later President of the Vermont Historical Society. In the official history of the Vermont Historical Society, Calais historian Weston A. Cate, Jr. (Director from 1975-1985) said "probably no member of the Society ever cared more about the Society or worked longer it its behalf than Dorman Kent." It is to Dorman's credit that the Society specialized in genealogical materials and there were "stretches of time when Kent literally was the Society".¹¹⁸

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Ira Rich Kent (1876-1945), Dorman B. E. Kent's cousin and grandson of Ira Kent, graduated from Tufts in 1899 and was an editor for *The Youth's Companion*, one of the most popular and influential publications for children of the 19th century, and later at Houghton Mifflin publishing company in Boston, Massachusetts. Ira Rich Kent married Louise Andrews (1886-1969) in 1912 and they lived year round in Brookline and later during the summer at Kents Corner.

Louise Andrews Kent (1886-1969) grew up in Brookline, Massachusetts, and after attending Simmons College and years as a Boston socialite, she married Ira Rich Kent and they had three children. After their marriage, Ira R. Kent brought Louise to his mother's house, the Leroy A. Kent House (#2) at Kents Corner. Beginning in 1924, the 'White House' became their summer home and Louise transformed the property into a festive gathering place for family and friends. Louise's husband, and her mother-in-law, Susan Blanche Hollister Kent (1852-1938), had "an interest in and influence over several properties" around Kents Corner and although Louise had no legal control over the properties, she "did wield enormous influence in the decisions concerning who bought or rented them". In 1928, Louise invited James and Esther Aldrich (#17) and their family to visit her in Calais because they "possessed the personal qualities and social background to make them candidates for membership in Kents Corner summer community". With Louise's approval, "a handful of prominent Philadelphia families ... helped to secure the appropriate social character of the summer community". In the depression of the 1930s, adding new members to the community served dual purposes: the right family expanded the character of the place and the sale meant that some building badly in need of repair would be restored into a beautiful summer home.¹¹⁹ The collection of farms in Calais offered Louise and her summer friends a vision of a traditional agrarian past free of industrialization and rapid

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change and was reflective of times remembered as trouble-free. This landscape shaped by agriculture became the standard by which people of her generation condemned cityscape.

In 1929, five years after Ira Rich and Louise Andrews Kent acquired the 'White House' (#2) and became summer residents at Kents Corner, Ira's cousin, Arthur Atwater Kent, Sr., acquired the historic Kent Hotel (#1) and the property returned to the Kent family.¹²⁰ Arthur Atwater Kent, Sr. (1873-1949), grandson of Remember Kent, Jr. was an inventor and millionaire who established the Atwater Kent Manufacturing Works in Philadelphia in 1902. Beginning in 1923 his company made radios and by 1930 was the leading firm in the radio industry. In 1927 he established the Atwater Kent Foundation, retired in 1936 and died in 1949 with an estate estimated at \$ 8 million.¹²¹

From 1929-1944, Louise Andrews Kent used the Kent Hotel (#1) as a guest house and began to slowly restore the deteriorated buildings on the old Herbert Kent property. Beginning in 1932 Louise relocated the old Corn Barn (#2A), from across the road and used it as a writing studio. During the 1940s Ira Rich Kent gave the 'Pioneer Cottage' (#12) to his daughter Elizabeth (1913-1985) and either the Remember Kent House (#21) or the J. M. Jacobs House (#11) to his son Hollister (1916-1974).

In addition to initiating a summer colony at Kents Corner, Louise Andrews Kent had a career as an author of twenty six books: adventure stories for children, New England cookbooks, and *Village Greens in New England*. Louise assumed the persona of 'Mrs. Appleyard' to write the novel *Mrs. Appleyard's Year* in 1941 and her autobiography *Mrs. Appleyard and I* in 1968. From 1962 to 1969 she wrote her Mrs. Appleyard food column for each quarterly issue of *Vermont Life* magazine that was edited (1950-1972) by her neighbor Walter R. Hard, Jr. (#35). Her 'summer kitchen' (1957) and 'winter kitchen' (1962) cookbooks were based on

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personal experience, family stories and fictionalized accounts of summer people.

After World War II the Farmer's Museum at Cooperstown in New York, the 'living history' museum at Old Sturbridge Village in Massachusetts, and the Shelburne Museum in Vermont were collecting, preserving and interpreting early American history. These museums were designed with relocated structures, but Kents Corner had remained an authentic place. The idea of a 'living history' or farm museum in Vermont was attractive to the trustees of the Vermont Historical Society especially considering the state's rural heritage. Calais historian Weston Cate, Jr. wrote that "no one can document who first had the idea that the Kent Tavern property in Calais, ten miles from the Society's headquarters, might be the spot for such an endeavor". Cate speculated that Dorman Kent may have suggested the idea, or perhaps it was Ira Rich Kent or his wife Louise Andrews Kent, who lived next door to the old Herbert Kent property, who first envisioned the historic Kent Hotel (#1) as a museum. At that time the "Vermont Historical Society had high hopes that the old Kent Tavern could become the centerpiece of an historic district that would include the Old West Church, the Robinson Sawmill, and extend down the hill to include the old Town Hall"¹²², a vision that would eventually be realized. In January 1944, the Kent Foundation gave the Society \$5,000 and in July the Society paid the foundation \$4,000 for the property and reserved \$1,000 for necessary repairs. An additional \$5,000 was forthcoming from the Foundation and the restoration work started in 1947. In 1949, A. Atwater Kent, Sr. died, left an endowment of \$30,000, and for the next three years Louise Andrews Kent managed the restoration of the buildings and was finally reimbursed by the Society for her expenses in 1952.¹²³ Calais historian Jill Mudgett concluded that Louise Andrews Kent's great efforts to operate the Kent Museum during the last decades of her life "would be the embodiment of her unique perspective – a

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celebration of her husband's nineteenth-century ancestors that was bound inextricably to contemporary twentieth-century connotations of place".¹²⁴

Louise Andrews Kent, as Curator and chair of the Society's Kent Tavern Committee for several years, chose the landscape paintings of James Franklin Gilman to illustrate the historic environment around Kents Corner at informal open houses in the restored Kent Hotel beginning in 1951. Gilman's work of a romantic, bucolic, pastoral and picturesque landscape at Kents Corner was ideal for Louise's 1950s interpretation of Colonial Revival. The ideology of the Colonial Revival was of a simple, rationally ordered, harmonic, and visually appealing past environment.¹²⁵

At the official opening of the Kent Museum (#1) in July 1953, Hollister Kent, great-grandson of Ira Kent, presented remarks on the history of the Kent Tavern and Society director Arthur Wallace Peach (1886-1956) expressed enthusiasm about the possibilities for the museum, as well as other historic buildings in what ultimately would become a historic district. Louise Kent's interpretation of Colonial Revival was realized in the opening of the Kent Museum (#1) and it grounded the neighborhood in local tradition for four decades.

Post Period of Significance: A Tradition Continued

Active interest lapsed in the Kent Museum when "no sustained effort was mounted to develop the resource" and the Society's small staff "had little time, money, or inclination to worry about the tavern". As the Society moved in the 1960s, 1970s and 1980s, it had not found a long-term solution to the management of the museum.¹²⁶ In 1978 the Vermont Historical Society acquired the Kent Barn (#1b), along with nearly four acres at Kents Corner, and restored the barn under the leadership R. Gregory Belcher (1903-1987) (#11), Society Trustee and President of the Calais Historical Society.¹²⁷

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During the mid 1980s Calais resident and anthropologist Dr. Eleanor Ott conducted archeological investigations at the Goodenough-Wheeler Farm Site (#42b) just south of the museum and also at the Abijah Wheelock homestead (#2e). Summer archeology workshops, *'Historic Archaeology and Rural Heritage'*, renewed an interest in the early history of the Kents Corner neighborhood.¹²⁸ Finally, in 1989 Michael Sherman, Society director from 1985-1995, announced that the Kent Museum would not reopen for the summer season. In 1991 the museum was transferred to the Vermont Division for Historic Preservation and the museum has not yet reopened.¹²⁹

At the same time that the Kent Museum was getting established in the 1950s there was renewed appreciation for the historic significance of the Robinson Sawmill (#20). In 1956 Bill Borland, of North Calais, acquired the 153-year-old operating Robinson-Kent Sawmill and kept the machinery operating until 1958. Howard Kent and Laura McKnight Kent Cooley, grandchildren of Abdiel Kent, acquired the mill, repaired the dam to preserve the mill and did not restart the machinery. The Aldrich Memorial Association was created in 1961 to preserve the mill and maintain a nature preserve around the mill pond. R. Gregory Belcher (#11) was president of the association in the 1970s and local architect John Ostrum (#12) supervised restoration work in the 1980s. In 2004 the turbine was restored, the sawmill was operated and the Robinson Sawmill (#20) is probably the oldest operating water-powered sawmill in Vermont.¹³⁰

In the early 1960s the historic architecture and rural landscape of this neighborhood was recognized and Forest Davis (#30) served as chair of the Calais Town History Committee in 1963. The Kents Corner Historic District and the Old West Church were both listed on the National Register of Historic Places in 1973. R. Gregory Belcher (#11), while president of the Calais Historical Society and Trustee of the Vermont Historical Society, proposed the creation of a town ordinance to protect the Kents Corner-Old West

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Church Historic District to the Calais Planning Commission in 1975.¹³¹ The historic architecture and sensitive development in the Kents Corner neighborhood were preserved officially by the Town in the formation of the Kents Corner-Old West Church Historic District and a 'design control district' in 1976.

The Vermont Division for Historic Preservation erected a marker (#1C) to honor the 'HISTORIC KENT TAVERN' in 1997 and continues to maintain the Kent Museum buildings. The Calais Historic Preservation Commission was created in 2002, appointments made in 2003 with Certified Local Government status awarded in 2004. Historic Kents Corner Inc., a private preservation organization, was organized in 2000 and is dedicated to the preservation of the Kent Museum and the cultural environment of the neighborhood. The Kents Corner Historic District evokes a distinctive sense of time and place and this Calais tradition of preserving the memory of its past is a civic religion called historic preservation.

¹ An account of the settlement of Calais was prepared by "S. W." (Shubael Wheeler) and printed in Zadock Thompson, ed., *A Gazetteer of the State of Vermont*, 1824, pp. 88-90; The account prepared by "S. W." for Thompson's 1842 gazetteer is a longer letter, pp. 41-43.

² "The Charter of Calais", *State Papers of Vermont, Volume Two*, pp. 37-39.

³ "Whence the Name" in Abby Maria Hemenway, *Vermont Historical Gazetteer*, pp. 130 and 154.

⁴ Esther Munroe Swift, *Vermont Place Names: Footprints of History*, pp. 438-441; Dorman B. E. Kent was not convinced, "no good proof to my mind has ever thus far been offered that he had anything to do with naming the two towns", in "History of Calais", *The Vermonter*, Vol. 19, No. 10-11, Oct.-Nov. 1914, pp. 163-168.

⁵ Thompson (1824), pp. 88-90; Hemenway, pp. 130-131; Marcus Warren Waite, "Pioneers of the Town of Calais, Vermont: 1781-1800", np.

⁶ D. B. E. Kent, "History of Calais" in *The Vermonter*, Vol. 19, No. 10-11, Oct.-Nov. 1914, pp. 163-168. D. B. E. Kent provides the name and place of origin of 179 of the first male settlers of Calais up until 1809. The second part of this article concludes in Vol. 19, No. 12, December 1914. For a rebuttal on these figures, see Jill Mudgett's "Kents Corner: A Guide to Documents Pertaining to Calais, Vermont, 1800-1850", footnote 13. T. D. Seymour Bassett offers reasons for this migration in "Migration to Vermont, 1761-1836" *Vermont Geographer*, Vol. 2, 1975, pp. 7-20.

⁷ "Kent Family" in Hemenway, pp. 158-160; see also Kent Family genealogy in Waite.

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⁸ Waite, "Pioneers". The author drew a map of the early roads "drawn entirely from descriptions of early roads, early locations of the pioneers, etc." as they "appeared about the year 1799". This hand drawn map shows the present Old West Church Road, Kent Hill Road and Robinson Cemetery Road meeting at what would become Kents Corner.

⁹ Curtis Family genealogy in Hemenway, pp. 152-154, and Curtis and Bliss Family genealogies in Waite, np; The 1800 census is summarized in Waite.

¹⁰ L. Vernon Briggs. *Genealogies of the Different Familis Bearing the Name of Kent in the United States together with Their Possible English Ancestry: A. D. 1295-1898*, pp. 131-132.

¹¹ James B. Garvin. *A Building History of Northern New England*, p. 7.

¹² This statement is not based on field evaluation. There may be buildings in Calais with the 'vertical plank' structural system. See, Jan Lewandoski, "The Plank Framed House in Northeastern Vermont" *Vermont History*, Vol. 23, No. 2, Spring 1985, pp. 104-121.

¹³ Hemenway, pp. 137-138. See "Scribe Rule and Square Rule Framing" in Garvin, pp. 10-11. For a discussion of the construction of mortise and tenon timber frames see Rob Tarule, "The Mortise and Tenon Timber Frame: Tradition and Technology" in *Tools and Technologies: America's Wooden Age*, pp. 28-42.

¹⁴ Jan Lewandoski, "The Early House in Northeastern Vermont: Typical and Atypical Forms, 1770-1830" *Vermont History*, Vol. 61, No. 1, Winter 1993, p. 38.

¹⁵ Curtis B. Johnson, Ed. *The Historic Architecture of Vermont: Guide to Vermont Architecture*, pp. 9 and 20. Thomas C. Hubka. *Big House, Little House, Back House, Barn: The Connected Farm Buildings of New England*, p. 134. Garvin, "The Greek Revival Style", pp. 114-118.

¹⁶ Hubka, p. 142.

¹⁷ Hubka, p. 134.

¹⁸ Hubka, p. 138-139.

¹⁹ John R. Stilgoe. *Common Landscape to America, 1580-1845*. p. 137.

²⁰ T. D. Seymour Bassett. *The Growing Edge: Vermont Villages, 1840-1880*, p. 5.

²¹ Hubka, pp. 9, 81-83.

²² Scott E. Hastings, Jr. and Geraldine S. Ames. *The Vermont Farm Year in 1890*.

²³ Thompson (1842), p. 43.

²⁴ Agricultural Extension Service, University of Vermont, "Agricultural Trends in Calais, Vermont", 1940. This report also includes the production and acreage of various crops.

²⁵ For examples of these structures see Hubka, "Outbuildings", pp. 61-68; and Visser, pp. 105-198.

²⁶ Stilgoe, p. 155. Hubka, "Barns", pp. 52-61. Thomas D. Visser. "Barns" in *Field Guide to New England Barns and Farm Buildings*, pp. 59-103. See illustration of Ira Kent Barn in Visser, p. 78.

²⁷ Allen Morse, "Manufactories in Calais" in Hemenway, p. 170. H. F. Walling, *Map of Washington County, Vermont*. 1858.

²⁸ Cate, *Forever Calais*, p. 10. F. W. Beers. *Atlas for Washington County, Vermont*, 1873.

²⁹ Albers, Jan, "Trees and Ashes" in *Hands on the Land*, p. 107. Rolando, Victor R. "Potash Kettles" in *200 Years of Soot and Sweat: The History and Archeology of Vermont's Iron, Charcoal, and Lime Industries*, pp. 37-39.

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³⁰ Nathan Rosenberg, "America's Rise to Woodworking Leadership" in Brooke Hindle, ed. *America's Wooden Age: Aspects of its Early Technology*, pp. 37-62. Census figures for 1840, 1850 and 1860.

³¹ Thompson (1824), pp. 89-90.

³² No author, "Joel Robinson's Old Sawmill, typescript, c. 1974. For Deacon Joshua Bliss's sawmill, see Dorman B. E. Kent, "Calais", Typescript, 1926. See also Garvin, "Upright and Reciprocating Sawmills", pp. 19-20, and Visser, "Saw Marks", pp. 26-30.

³³ Hemenway, p. 170. D.B. E. Kent, "History of Calais", p. 195.

³⁴ S. Goodenough (Salem) appears on both the 1858 and 1873 maps. In the 1880 Census he is listed as a carpenter and joiner.

³⁵ For a history of mill development in Calais, see Morse, "Manufactories in Calais" in Hemenway, pp. 170-171. Walling, 1858. Beers, 1873.

³⁶ Hemenway, p. 170. The one store may have been Samuel Rich's general store in Rich's Hollow (North Montpelier), see Cate, p. 40.

³⁷ Hemenway, p. 170. Garvin, "Circular Sawmills", pp. 26-27. "Joel Robinson's Old Sawmill", passim. For the operations of a typical upright sawmill converted to a circular saw, see Scott E. Hastings, Jr. *The Last Yankees: Folkways in Eastern Vermont and the Border Country*, pp. 49-59.

³⁸ Jill Mudgett. "'By Work in Shop': Boot and Shoe Production in Calais, Vermont, 1829-1850" in *Vermont History*, Vol. 69, Winter 2001, Symposium Supplement, pp. 105-115. See also, Jill Mudgett, "Kents Corner: A Guide to Documents Pertaining to Calais, Vermont, 1800-1850", Abstract.

³⁹ Hemenway, p. 158. In "Kents Corner: A Guide", Mudgett concludes that Abdiel learned the craft of shoe making from Kent relatives in Rehoboth, Massachusetts, p. 11.

⁴⁰ Mudgett, p. 106.

⁴¹ Hemenway, p. 158. See Mudgett, "By Work in Shop", for a look at Abdiel Kent's business practices in the Boot and Shoe Manufactory, pp. 104-115.

⁴² U. S. Census of Manufacturers, 1860, Calais. Unfortunately the Census of 1840 only gives gross numbers for agricultural and manufactured products and no company names. The Calais page is missing in the Census of 1850.

⁴³ U. S. Census of Manufacturers, 1870, Calais.

⁴⁴ U. S. Census of Manufacturers, 1860, Calais.

⁴⁵ D. B. E. Kent, "Calais". Mudgett, "By Work in Shop", pp. 108 and 114.

⁴⁶ D. B. E. Kent, "Calais". The Brick Kiln does not appear on Walling's map of 1858, but does appear on the Beers map of 1873, south of Kent Hill Road, east of the Rev. O. Davis House in Gospel Hollow. See Mudgett, "Kents Corner: A Guide", footnotes 115 and 116.

⁴⁷ Garvin, "Brick Manufacture", pp. 48-54. Harley J. McKee. *Introduction to Early American Masonry: Stone, Brick, Mortar and Plaster*. Pp. 41-55.

⁴⁸ Mudgett, "Kents Corner: A Guide", footnotes 115 and 117. The blacksmith shop appears on the Walling 1858 map as simply 'B. S. Shop' and on the Beers 1873 map as 'I Kent B. S. S.' Walling. Map of Washington County, Vermont, 1858. Beers, Atlas of Washington County, Vermont, 1873.

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⁴⁹ D. B. E. Kent, 'Merchants, Manufacturers, Mechanics, Artisans, 1800-1925' in *Calais*. The 1858 map lists L. E. Persons in house #13 and the 1873 map lists J. Persons in house # 12 and J. Persons, Jr. in house # 3.

⁵⁰ Cate, p. 50.

⁵¹ U. S. Census of Manufacturers, 1860, Calais.

⁵² Hemenway, p. 158. Mudgett points out the difficulty of verifying the information in Hemenway about Kent's real estate holdings outside of Calais.

⁵³ Cate, p. 40. For an account of 1839 prices for goods and services available at the store, see Cate, pp. 47-48.

⁵⁴ Abdiel Kent's Account Book and three Daybooks, at the Vermont Historical Society, are discussed in detail in Mudgett's "Kents Corner: A Guide to Documents Pertaining to Calais, Vermont, 1800-1850". Jack Larkin, "'A Busy, Bustling, Industrious Population'", in *The Reshaping of Everyday Life, 1790-1840*, pp. 1-61.

⁵⁵ Carolyn Fuller Sloat. "The Center of Local Commerce: The Asa Knight Store of Dummerston, Vermont, 1827-1851" *Vermont History*, Vol. 53, No. 4, Fall 1885, pp. 205-220. For the lifestyle of a storekeeper, see Jane Beck, *The General Store in Vermont: An Oral History*. 1980.

⁵⁶ Beers, 1873.

⁵⁷ Hemenway, p. 158.

⁵⁸ Calais Land Records, Book 19, Page 398, December 22, 1916.

⁵⁹ This list of building components comes from Louise Andrews Kent, "The Kent Museum", Brochure, Vermont Historical Society, 1956. See also, Mudgett, "Kents Corner: A Guide", footnote, 98.

⁶⁰ Bassett, "Vermont Post Roads, 1837-1841" in *Growing Edge*, p. 28. Barbara Floersch. "The Road to Memphremagog: A Remembrance of Roads Past" *Vermont Life*, Fall 1984.

⁶¹ D. B. E. Kent, "History of Calais", Vol. 1.

⁶² Thompson (1842), p. 43.

⁶³ Hamilton Child. *Gazetteer of Washington County, VT: 1783-1889*, p. 229.

⁶⁴ Hemenway, pp. 158-160, I. R. Kent may have only operated the general store; D. B. E. Kent, 'Merchants', *Calais*.

⁶⁵ William Morgan. *American Country Churches*. p. 9.

⁶⁶ John C. DeBoer and Clara Merritt DeBoer. "The Formation of Town Churches: Church, Town and State in Early Vermont" *Vermont History*, Vol. 64, No. 2, 1996, pp. 69 and 85.

⁶⁷ Thompson (1824), p. 89 and Thompson (1842), p. 42.

⁶⁸ Cate, pp. 73-74.

⁶⁹ T. D. Seymour Bassett. *The Gods of the Hills: Piety and Society in Nineteenth-Century Vermont*, p. 105.

⁷⁰ Rev. Lester Warren, "Universalist Parish in Calais" in Hemenway, pp. 145-147.

⁷¹ Hemenway, pp. 143-144.

⁷² Cate, p. 76.

⁷³ Mudgett, "Kents Corner: A Guide", p. 47.

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⁷⁴ For a photograph of the carriage shed behind the Old West Church, see Dorman B. E. Kent. *History of Calais*. There is a better photograph in the collection of the Calais Historical Society.

⁷⁵ Hemenway, p. 144.

⁷⁶ Hemenway, p. 154.

⁷⁷ Child, p. 228.

⁷⁸ Rev. Lester Warren, "Universalist Parish in Calais" in Hemenway, pp. 145-147.

⁷⁹ Hemenway, p. 144.

⁸⁰ D. B. E. Kent. "*History of Calais*", p. 172.

⁸¹ Cate, pp. 78 and 86.

⁸² For comparison to other New England Meetinghouses and Churches built before 1830 and still standing, see Sinott, Edmund W. *Meetinghouse and Church in Early New England*, pp. 211 and 237. Sinott described 509 buildings and recorded four types for the meetinghouses and churches in the Puritan tradition of Congregational and Unitarian.

⁸³ The years which saw a gradual architectural change from meeting house to church in New England also saw the dominant interior spaces of the 17th and 18th centuries increasing warmed with artificial light, stove-generated heat and decorative textiles. Jane C. Nylander. "Toward Comfort and Uniformity in New England Meeting Houses, 1750-1850" in *New England Meeting House and Church: 1630-1850*, p. 86.

⁸⁴ "Old West Church" in *Barre Daily Times*, July 31, 1928.

⁸⁵ D. B. E. Kent, "Historic Old West Church in Calais", *Montpelier Evening Argus*, June 13, 1921. "Church Restoration Leads to Other Changes", *Barre Daily Times*, June 6, 1938.

⁸⁶ Herbert W. Congdon. *Old Vermont Houses*. 1940, pp. 181-183. Also, "Some Old Vermont Meeting Houses and Churches" *Vermont History*, Vol. 27, No. 1, January 1959. pp. 3-17. Congdon may have been comparing these churches to larger churches with more elaborate details.

⁸⁷ Louise Andrews Kent. *Village Greens in New England*, pp. 39 and 41. In 1956 she prepared a pamphlet about the history of the church that was distributed to visitors until the text was expanded by the Old West Church Association in 2005.

⁸⁸ Alma Leonard. "Records Obtained From Inscriptions Upon Headstones in the Cemeteries of Calais Of Persons Buried Previous to 1870". "Miscellaneous Record Book", recorded by C. R. Dwinell, Town Clerk, 1919. This cemetery contains about 100 burials and it still in use.

⁸⁹ "Bliss Genealogy" in Waite.

⁹⁰ Rev. Orrin Davis, Miscellaneous Record Book, Calais Town Clerk's office.

⁹¹ Cate, *Forever Calais*, pp. 82-84.

⁹² Hemenway, p. 144-145, Cate, pp. 82-84. For more information about the various churches and their pastors see Marcus Warren Waite. For congregational ministers in Calais, see John M. Comstock. *The Congregational Churches of Vermont and Their Ministry, 1762-1942, Historical and Statistical*, p. 48. See Hemenway, p. 146 for a list of Universalist ministers.

⁹³ Leonard. "Records Obtained From Inscriptions Upon Headstones".

⁹⁴ Allan I. Ludwig. *Graven Images: New England Stonecarving and its Symbols, 1650-1815*. For a list of tombstones see, Alexander Spidle. "Gravestones (copied) in the

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Robinson Cemetery in Calais, Vermont to November 1970". See also Leonard. "Records Obtained From Inscriptions Upon Headstones in the Cemeteries of Calais Of Persons Buried Previous to 1870".

⁹⁵ Joseph S. Wood, *The New England Village*, p. 65.

⁹⁶ Jan Albers. *Hands on the Land: A History of the Vermont Landscape*, p. 12.

⁹⁷ Thompson (1824), pp. 88-90; See, Wheelock genealogy in Waite, np. For a list of Washington County Senators from Calais, Calais Town Representatives and Calais Town Officers, see Cate, *Forever Calais*, p. 226.

⁹⁸ Walling, 1858 map.

⁹⁹ Cate, *Forever Calais*, pp. 114-115.

¹⁰⁰ For a list of 'warnings out' in Calais, see Alden M. Rollins, *Vermont Warnings Out, Vol. 1, Northern Vermont*, pp. 294-299.

¹⁰¹ D. B. E. Kent, "Calais", Vol. 1. "Overseers of the Poor".

¹⁰² Cate, *Forever Calais*, pp. 115-120; Robert McCullough "A Forest in Every Town: Vermont's History of Communal Woodlands", *Vermont History*, Vol. 64, No. 1, Winter 1996, passim.

¹⁰³ McCullough "A Forest in Every Town", p. 12.

¹⁰⁴ Steven R. Hoffbeck. "'Remember the Poor' (*Galatians* 2:10): Poor Farms in Vermont" *Vermont History*, Vol. 57, No. 4, Fall 1989, p. 235.

¹⁰⁵ Calais Conservation Commission and Russ Barrett, "Management Plan for the Bliss Pond Town Forest", 2004, pp. 4-6. This management plan includes an inventory of natural and cultural resources.

¹⁰⁶ Max Jolley, *The Postmasters of Vermont*, "Washington County, Calais", pp. 2.

¹⁰⁷ Hemenway, p. 158. See also, Cate, pp. 226-231.

¹⁰⁸ State of Vermont, *Legislative Directory*, 1882.

¹⁰⁹ Cate, *Forever Calais*, pp. 226-228.

¹¹⁰ Cate, *Forever Calais*, pp. 229-231. The monument was updated with names in 2004.

¹¹¹ J. Kevin Graffagnino, "Arcadia in New England: Divergent Visions of a Changing Vermont" in *Celebrating Vermont: Myths and Realities*, pp. 45-60.

¹¹² Adele G. Dawson. *James Franklin Gilman: nineteenth century painter*. (Canaan, NH: 1975), pp. 9, 55-60, 117-118. In the first version of 'Kents Corner' the left corner of the picture features Abdiel's youngest son Howard, Herbert, and a grandson, Fred Bacon, whose mother, Ellen, was Abdiel's oldest daughter. The group to the right includes the youngest members of the family, Marion Kent, Laura Bacon and Dorman Kent. This is the only one of Gilman's landscapes of farm and family in which the people are posed. At Kents Corner, Gilman made charcoal portraits of Ira Richardson Kent, Polly Curtis Kent, Ira Kent, Leroy Abdiel Kent, Blanche Hollister Kent and Ruth Bridgman Eaton. Kevin F. Graffagnino, "The Sylvanus Morse Farm" in *Vermont in the Victorian Age*. pp. 79-81. See also, Louise Andrews Kent and Elizabeth Kent Gay, "James F. Gilman: Forgotten recorder of rural Vermont", *Vermont Life*, Vol. XI, No. 11, Winter 1956-57, pp. 32-38. And the museum catalog, *James Franklin Gilman, 1850-1929*. Robert Hull Fleming Museum, University of Vermont, Burlington: 1970.

¹¹³ Albers, pp. 129-131.

¹¹⁴ Stilgoe, p. 342.

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¹¹⁵ Marcus Warren Waite. *The Wheelock Family of Calais, Vermont: Their Ancestry and Descendants*, pp. 8 and 9.

¹¹⁶ *Vermont: A Profile of the Green Mountain State*, p. 8.

¹¹⁷ D. B. E. Kent. "Address given by Dorman B. E. Kent at the annual town meeting of Calais, March 4, 1941, as part of the special celebration of the Sesquicentennial Anniversary of the statehood of Vermont".

¹¹⁸ Prentiss C. Dodge. "Dorman Bridgman Eaton Kent", *Encyclopedia Vermont Biography*, p. 242. "D. B. E. K", *Vermont History News*, Vol. 2, No. 12, August 1951, pp. 7-8. Weston A. Cate, Jr. *Up & Doing: The Vermont Historical Society, 1838-1970*, pp. 86-90.

¹¹⁹ Janet E. Schulte. "'Summer Homes': A History of Family Summer Vacation Communities in Northern New England, 1880-1940", pp. 59-69.

¹²⁰ Actually, Louise A. Kent purchases the Herbert Kent farm, with 190 acres that included the Brick House (Calais Land Records, Book 20, Page 265, March 7, 1929), and sells it a few months later to A. Atwater Kent.

¹²¹ "Arthur Atwater Kent", *Dictionary of American Biography*, pp. 451-453. A. A. Kent, Jr. (1909-1988).

¹²² Cate, *Forever Calais*, p. 195.

¹²³ Cate, *Up & Doing*, pp. 75-79. "The Kent Tavern Enters Into History", *Vermont History News and Notes*, Vol. 3, No. 12, August, 1952, pp. 89-90.

¹²⁴ Mudgett, "Family Folklore and Twentieth-Century American Regionalism as Combined Influences on One Woman's Understanding of Like in a Vermont Town", pp. 1-2.

¹²⁵ Wood, pp. 149 and 174.

¹²⁶ Cate, *Up & Doing*, pp. 78 and 79, and Cate, *Forever Calais*, pp. 195-196.

¹²⁷ "Kent Barn on Firm Footing" *Vermont History News*, January-April, 1979, pp. 54-55.

¹²⁸ Eleanor Ott and Doug Frink, "There's a Hole in Your History", *Vermont History News*, Vol. 37, No.2, March-April 1986, pp. 39-47. And "Two Hundred Years of History" *Vermont History News*, Vol. 39, No. 2, March-April 1988, pp. 42-47.

¹²⁹ "VHS will not operate Kent Museum in 1989" *Vermont History News*, March-June, 1989, p. 60. "The Kent Museum- A New Proposal" *Vermont History News*, January-April, 1990, pp. 60-62. For an understanding of the partly state-operated Vermont Historical Society and the Vermont Division for Historic Preservation, see Michael Sherman, *Vermont State Government Since 1965*. pp. 417-452.

¹³⁰ "Robinson Sawmill Back On Line" in *The Hardwick Gazette*, September 29, 2004;

"Kent Barn on Firm Footing", *Vermont History News*, January-April, 1979, pp. 54-55;

"R. Gregory Belcher, 1903-1987", *Vermont History News*, November-October, 1987, pp. 110-111.

¹³¹ *Vermont History News and Notes*, May-June, 1975, p. 20.